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THE SPELL

A Comedy in One Act

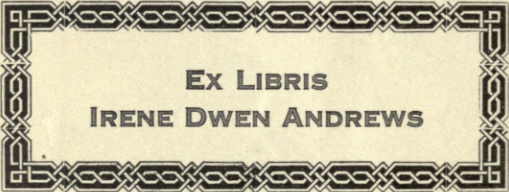
BY

BERNARD DUFFY



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IRENE DWEN ANDREWS

THE SPELL

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

BERNARD DUFFY

DUBLIN

THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED

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1922

CHARACTERS

JOHN HERATY	.	<i>An</i>	<i>Umbrella-Mender</i>
MRS. HERATY	.	.	<i>His Wife</i>
THE LEPRACAUN	}	.	.
THE BEAN SIDHE			
FAR DARRIG			
THE LENAUN SIDHE			
Several Fairy Musicians and Dancers			

SCENE	.	<i>A Rath in the Dublin Mountains</i>		
TIME	.	.	.	<i>The Present Day</i>

NOTES

The Lepracaun is the fairy shoe-maker who knows where crocks of gold are buried.

The Bean Sidhe is the fairy who sings lamentations foretelling death in certain ancient Irish families.

Far Darrig ("The Red Man") is a mischievous, scoffing fairy.

The Lenaun Sidhe, or fairy sweetheart, is the Native Muse who inspires the poets ; and those who love her pine and die under her influence.

THE SPELL

The scene is laid at dusk in a rath in the Dublin mountains, on the green sward, which is fringed with trees. A big stone stands in the centre, and in front of this, shaded from the breeze, is a small glowing gipsy fire. Near the fire reclining to the left side, is HERATY trying to read a tattered book by the dim light from the embers. His bag of tools and bundle of umbrellas lie at his feet. Mrs. HERATY, on the other side of the stone, is sitting up stiffly, preening the drooping feathers of her bonnet.

Mrs. Heraty (acidly). It's a wonder to me, Mr. Heraty, that you'd be wastin' your time on that thrashy book.

Heraty. And how, ma'am, could I employ me valuable time better at the present moment ?

Mrs. Heraty. You could talk to your wife.

Heraty. I could ; but the wife doesn't always take an interest in me conversation, and it's hard on a man to be talkin' to a person with a nose that's constantly turned up to the stars.

Mrs. Heraty. It's the nose I was born with, and it's not for you to be findin' fault with the handiwork of God.

Heraty. That's true—God bless the mark—will that do?

Mrs. Heraty. It would do, if you meant it. But I know it's sneerin' you are. Though there was a time when you admired all me features, and I mind when you read a bit out of a book to me which you said described me nose: "Tip-tilted like the petals of a rose," you said it was.

Heraty. The Lord forgive me! Did I say that?

Mrs. Heraty. You did, and it was that, and the like of it, that put the *commether* on me. You drew me from me home with your deluderin' tongue.

Heraty (with up-lifted finger). That's a confession, ma'am, that it wasn't for love you married me, nor for me youth and beauty, but for the vanity of hearin' yourself praised.

Mrs. Heraty. It was not, then; though you did say a week before we were married that I was that nice that you could eat me.

Heraty (with a sigh). And ever since I'm sorry I didn't.

Mrs. Heraty (hotly). And if *you're* sorry, what am I, that had me own father's door closed against me, so that from that to this I've only seen the sunny side of his latch, an' me passin' like a *shuiler* on the road? Oh, it

was the unlucky day for me when I said the words before the altar.

Heraty. It was in one of the unlucky months, ma'am.

Mrs. Heraty. It was not ; it was in April, as well you know, and I always heard that May was the unlucky month to marry in.

Heraty (drily). There are eleven others, ma'am.

Mrs. Heraty. Indeed, I suppose I'd be just the same to-day, no matter what month it started in.

Heraty. You would. The lily can't be painted, Mrs. Heraty, nor a silk purse made out of a sow's ear.

Mrs. Heraty. I pass over the part about the sow's ear, but paint I never did, an' well you know it.

Heraty. True, ma'am, true ; your beauty was unadorned—such as it was.

Mrs. Heraty. "Such as it was !" So that's the way now is it ? I wonder, Mr. Heraty, what you married me for at all.

Heraty. We can link little fingers and wish—the same thought was in my mind.

Mrs. Heraty. Well, what was it ? (*Silence.*) What was it ?

Heraty. I give it up. Maybe it was the foolishness of youth.

Mrs. Heraty. Bedad, then, if you left the foolishness behind you with your youth, it would be some consolation ; but the youth is

gone, and the foolishness is with you still, and this night caps it, bringin' me up to this God-forsaken place instead of some decent lodgin'-house in the village below.

Heraty. We had no money for lodgin's.

Mrs. Heraty. We'd have had it if you hadn't spent our few shillins on them thrashy books on the quays of Dublin.

Heraty. Even if we had the money, ma'am, there's no lodgin'-house in the village at all. So you might as well be contented here first as last. The weather is most salubrious, and we'll sleep a healthier sleep in the open air of heaven than in the stuffiness of a bedroom.

Mrs. Heraty. An' maybe a dew will fall before mornin' that will leave us parlatie with rheumatism. I knew a woman from Knocknacran that fell asleep in the open in the clouds of the night, an' she at a Vigil at the Holy Well, an'—to herself it may be tould—she lost her speech entirely, an' had to learn the deaf and dumb alphabet on her fingers.

Heraty. This adventure promises better than I thought. Did she recover?

Mrs. Heraty. She did, in the heel of the hunt, at a Mission sermon on the torments of Hell.

Heraty. It must have been a great blow to her husband.

Mrs. Heraty (sharply). What must?

Heraty. The misfortune that happened.

Mrs. Heraty. An' maybe the same will happen to you.

Heraty. It's seldom I hear a cheerful word from you ; but I don't think it will.

Mrs. Heraty. Anyhow it's not right to be sleepin' in a rath—they say that the fairies do be in these places on moonlit nights.

Heraty. So you do believe in fairies, like meself.

Mrs. Heraty. It's a wonder you wouldn't have more sense !

Heraty. I have read, ma'am, that poets an' novel-writers an' co-operators believe in them—an' why not umbrella-menders, too ?

Mrs. Heraty. Umbrella-menders ought to know better than the likes of them—there's no such thing, I tell you.

Heraty. A minute ago you thought there was—on moonlit nights.

Mrs. Heraty. I wish you wouldn't be so fond of castin' up. I never met such a man for takin' the words off the tip of a person's tongue an' twistin' them. I said that they do be sayin' it, but I didn't say I believed in them.

Heraty. But do you ?

Mrs. Heraty. I do *not*.

Heraty. Well, then, you needn't worry about them, and you can sleep in comfort.

Mrs. Heraty. Comfort, moryah ! It's little comfort I've had since I married you.

Heraty. You took me for better or for worse.

Mrs. Heraty. Aye, but it was all worse an'

no better. (*She wraps her shawl around her.*)
I'm goin' to sleep, if I can ; though I know it'll
be me death—thanks to you.

Heraty. Don't mention it, ma'am.

(*She takes a large umbrella from the bundle,
opens it, sets it down at her feet, and lies
down in such a way that the audience
cannot see her behind it.*)

Mrs. Heraty (from behind the umbrella). Good-
night.

Heraty. The same to you, ma'am, and many
of them.

(*A grunt from behind the umbrella is the
only response.*)

Heraty. Thank God for the silence of the
night, anyhow.

(*He lies down on his left side, pillows his
head on his arm and goes to sleep. The
moon rises, and the light grows stronger.
Soft music is heard, a slow movement at
first, which accelerates as the LEPRAC-
CAUN'S head rises behind the stone.
He climbs quickly on to the top of the stone,
dragging with him his sack of shoes. He
sits down with his legs dangling over the
front, and having extracted a shoe and
hammer from the sack, begins hammering ;
the music by this time having developed
into a brisk tapping measure. He finishes
one shoe, and then starts another.*)

HERATY wakes up, raises himself on his elbow, and watches the little man at work for a few moments. Then he shoots out his arm suddenly and grips the LEPRACAUN by the ankle. The LEPRACAUN is startled, and the hammering and the music cease at once.)

Heraty. I have ye, me bucko !

Lepracaun (blinking down at him). You have me, sure enough. *(He begins to wriggle, trying to free his ankle from HERATY'S grip.)*

Heraty. Ye needn't be wrigglin', for I'm not goin' to let you go in a hurry. *(He calls to his wife.)* Anastasia ! Anastasia !

Mrs. Heraty (sleepily). Well, what is it now ?

Heraty. Hurry up ; I've caught a fairy.

Mrs. Heraty. You've caught your granny in a sack ! *(She sits up.)* Bedad, you have ! Hold on to him. *(She closes the umbrella and leaves it lying near the stone.)*

Heraty. I will if I can, but he's as slippery as an eel.

Mrs. Heraty (very business-like). Now that we have him we must tie him up with a red woollen thread.

Heraty (impatiently). Arrah, talk sense, woman. Where would we get the like of that ?

Mrs. Heraty. Pull a thread out of your chest-protector.

Heraty. I haven't it on me. *(To LEPRACAUN.)* Aisy, avic ; none of your tricks. *(To*

Mrs. HERATY.) I haven't it on me, I tell you.

Mrs. Heraty. Do you mean to tell me that you threw it off before the first of June! Don't you know that you should never cast a clout until May is out?

Heraty. Don't be wastin' time; I've cast it, an' it's in the bag. Hurry up, like a good woman.

(She goes to the bag, and takes from it a red flannel chest-protector, which she inspects disgustedly.)

Mrs. Heraty. You have this in a nice state.

Heraty. Never mind the state of it, but get me the thread.

(She draws a long thread from the chest-protector.)

Heraty. Now tie it round his leg.

(She kneels down and ties the thread around the leg of the LEPRACAUN, who has been blinking at them inscrutably all the time. HERATY winds the thread round his fingers.)

Mrs. Heraty. There now!

Heraty. We have ye now, me lad.

Lepracaun. Aye, you have me. And now that you have me, what do you want?

Heraty. Bedad, it would be easier to tell you what we don't want.

Mrs. Heraty. We want one thing that'll

get us all the rest—money. You can just tell us where there's a crock of gold an' that's all we'll ask.

Heraty. The very thing—a crock of gold would be just what the doctor ordered.

Lepracaun. You're just a bit late for a crock of gold. The last one was taken up in my district by a man of the O'Sullivans.

Heraty. Well, bad cess to him !

Lepracaun. You're late with that prayer, too. He got six months in jail for hoardin' gold during the recent unpleasantness in Europe—it was found in his house by a policeman.

Mrs. Heraty. If you haven't a crock of gold, then what are you goin' to give us ?

Heraty. We won't let you go until you promise somethin'.

Lepracaun (after a second's thought). You can have three wishes.

Mrs. Heraty. Well, then, I wish——

Heraty (interrupting her). Wait a minute, an' don't be so hasty.

Lepracaun. It doesn't matter. *She* wouldn't get her wish. It was you that caught me, and it's you that will have the wishes.

Mrs. Heraty. That's always the way—the women never gets anythin' but disappointments.

Heraty. Will ye keep that tongue of yours quiet until I think. (*He rubs his chin with his hand, pensively.*) I have it ! I wish you'd

let us see the fairies that come here to dance an' play their music.

Mrs. Heraty (disgusted). Well, of all the ould omadauns! There's one wish gone already (*contemptuously*) for fairies!

Heraty. Well, sure, I have two others left, an' I can wish for the moon if I like.

Mrs. Heraty. It's just like what you would wish for—something that'd be no use to you.

Lepracaun. Anyhow, he has wished once, and that wish will be granted.

Heraty. When will we see them?

Lepracaun. Soon, very soon. Listen! they are coming up the hill now.

(Music is heard faintly in the distance, coming gradually nearer. HERATY and Mrs. HERATY stand spell-bound until the FAIRIES dance gaily into the rath. They are headed by a little Piper, who sits down at the back, and the music continues while they dance.)

Mrs. Heraty (when the music ceases). There they are now, an' you could have seen them, anyway, without wastin' a wish.

Lepracaun. Ma'am, you're mistaken; they can't be seen by everyone, and without my help, you could not see them now. I have put a spell on you.

Mrs. Heraty. Well, now that I do see them, I don't think much of them. I've seen better

in the convent school at home at the Christmas concert—"The Magic Rose" it was.

The Lepracaun (grimly). You will soon see a fairy that you didn't see at the convent school. Listen! she is coming.

(The weird song of the BEAN SIDHE is heard outside. She sings it through once, and begins the second time. The Fairy Piper starts the dancing tune, and the two airs are running counter to each other. Mrs. HERATY grips HERATY by the arm fearfully.)

Heraty. What is that we hear?

Lepracaun. 'Tis the *Bean Sidhe* practising her voice. She hasn't had much use for it lately—the fine weather has made the country very healthy.

Mrs. Heraty. The Lord save us! maybe she is crying for one of us?

Lepracaun. No, ma'am, you are not on her visiting list.

Mrs. Heraty. Thank God for that.

Heraty. Amen! Is she coming here?

Lepracaun. She is; I have her brogues ready for her.

(The BEAN SIDHE comes in singing softly to herself. As she catches sight of the HERATYS she stops singing.)

Bean Sidhe. Who are these strangers?

Lepracaun. Two mortals who wish to see you, *Bean Sidhe*.

Heraty (with nervous politeness). I'm glad to make your acquaintance, ma'am.

Bean Sidhe. Then you are the first that ever was, for it's a lone creature I am in this world of woe.

(*FAR DARRIG, entering, overhears.*)

Far Darrig (scoffing). Nobody loves her, and small wonder : she's always whinin' and cryin' about something.

Bean Sidhe. I cry only for them that have the blood of the Gael in them, and they leavin' this earth.

Far Darrig. Dry tears they are, like a keener's at a funeral, with not as much salt in them as would pickle a midge.

Mrs. Heraty (to Bean Sidhe). Was it you, ma'am, that was crying outside the house when ould Mulnarry, the Gombeen man, was dying ?

Bean Sidhe. It was, for there was only myself to do it.

Mrs. Heraty. You were the only one that did, anyhow, and you had little to do cryin' for that ould curmudgeon.

Bean Sidhe. His blood was pure.

Mrs. Heraty. It was not then ; he had boils all over him an' he dyin'.

Bean Sidhe. He was the last of his kind.

Mrs. Heraty. Well, that was nothin' to cry about.

Bean Sidhe (loftily). It's not for the like of you to teach me. I, who have cried for the High Kings of Erin, will not take insult from the daughter of a kern.

Mrs. Heraty. I'm the daughter of a decent man.

Bean Sidhe. When you behave like one, I'll believe you.

Mrs. Heraty. I'm entitled to me opinion as well as anyone.

Heraty (pacifically). Now, ladies! ladies! Remember that you *are* ladies!

Bean Sidhe (proudly). I remember *all* things.

Mrs. Heraty. Aye, but you forget yourself, ma'am.

(The BEAN SIDHE shrugs her shoulders and turns away to examine brogues which the LEPRACAUN offers her.)

Far Darrig (to Heraty). Are you this lady's husband?

Heraty (miserably). I am.

Far Darrig. Poor man! Why do you keep her?

Heraty. I'll have to keep her—" 'Till death do us part."

Far Darrig. You must long for death to come.

Heraty. Well, no, then, I do not. I'm the kind of man that loves life—in spite of everything.

Far Darrig. Still, death would put an end to your troubles, wouldn't it?

Heraty. It would, but, d'ye know, the cure might be worse than the disorder. It's a weary world, but we must make the best of it.

Far Darrig. In *Tir-na-nOge* we are never weary.

Heraty. It's well to be you. I wouldn't mind being a fairy meself.

Mrs. Heraty. A nice-lookin' fairy you'd be. I suppose, if you were, you'd have her ladyship for your wife (*indicating the BEAN SIDHE*).

Bean Sidhe (*turning round*). I am not for such things. I am wedded to misery.

Heraty. I can sympathise with you, ma'am, so am I.

Mrs. Heraty. Oh, why did I marry such a man? Always the hard word he has; no sympathy, no kindness, nothing but the lash of his tongue, and the curl of his lip, night, noon an' mornin'.

Bean Sidhe. The men are all the same, my dear. That fellow (*indicating FAR DARRIG, who grins*) has the heart scalded in me with his scoffin' and his jeers.

Mrs. Heraty. The women has to suffer always.

Bean Sidhe. They have, my dear; the men have no consideration.

Mrs. Heraty. Consideration! You might as well expect to get feathers from a frog as consideration from a man.

Bean Sidhe. Indeed, I see it everywhere. Come here till I tell you what I heard on my rounds the other night.

(She and Mrs. HERATY withdraw to the back of the rath and whisper and nod together.)

Heraty (looking at them). Birds of a feather flock together.

Far Darrig. Am I to take it, then, that you are of the same feather as that lady?

Heraty. I hope not. You see, as I explained to you, it's not a case of flockin' with us now—we're spancelled together.

Far Darrig. There is no spancelling in Fairyland—we take our partners and leave them as we will.

Heraty. Just the way they do in England an' America. But we haven't come to that in Ireland yet, thank you. Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know, anyhow.

Far Darrig. You mortals are a strange people. You are a great source of amusement to *us*—with all your troubles and struggles and your unending toil for nothing.

Heraty. A man must work for the bit he eats.

Far Darrig. *We* never work.

Heraty. Just like the swells an' the tramps of the world; but as I'm neither the one nor the other, I have to work.

Far Darrig. You needn't do it, if you don't like.

Heraty. I don't like, but I have to do it, I tell you. Now, if I gave up this life, what would you advise me to do instead ?

(The LENAUN SIDHE enters, and stands looking at Heraty.)

Far Darrig. I'd advise you to do nothing.

Heraty. Bedad, if I did that I'd starve ; for besides umbrella-mendin' I have neither art nor craft.

Lenaun Sidhe (touching his arm). I could give you an art that would raise you above the common kind.

Heraty (starting). I beg your pardon, miss, I didn't know you were there.

Lenaun Sidhe. I have only come, but my heart is glad that I have come.

Heraty. Indeed, miss, it's a sad heart that never rejoices.

Lenaun Sidhe. My heart leaps with joy to think that there are still men in Erin fit to take their places with the heroes that have gone to *Tir-na-nOge*.

Heraty. Is that a fact ? And where might they be ?

Lenaun Sidhe. There is one in your two shoes.

Heraty (looking down at his boots). In my two——! D'ye mean meself ?

Lenaun Sidhe. None other.

Heraty (to Far Darrig). Am dam but this is a notorious fine girl ! Who might she be, now ?

Far Darrig. She is the *Lenaun Sidhe*. She brings great gifts to those she loves.

Lenaun Sidhe. I would bring you the gift of poesy.

Heraty. That would be very nice of you, miss. But what use would the like of that be to me?

Lenaun Sidhe. You would be a poet, and hold high place in the esteem of men.

Heraty. Aye, miss, high fame and low diet; for be all accounts, the poets do find it very hard to live on their poetry.

Lenaun Sidhe. It is the greatest gift of all.

Mrs. Heraty (*who has just become aware of the Lenaun Sidhe's presence, coming forward*). Mr. Heraty, may I ask what collougin' you have with this bould strap, with her brazen face an' her glad eyes?

Heraty. She says her heart is glad, ma'am, an' I suppose the gladness shines in her eyes.

Lenaun Sidhe. My heart is glad, an' my eyes are glad to rest on this noble form.

(*HERATY looks sheepishly self-conscious.*)

Mrs. Heraty. Well, then, miss, let your eyes rest on one of your own sort, but keep them off my man, or it will be worse for you.

Far Darrig. It'll be worse for him, I'm thinkin'; she has a way with the men, that one.

Lenaun Sidhe. I would give this man the secret of the beauty of the world.

Heraty. Bedad, I'd like that, sure enough.

Mrs. Heraty. Well, then, you'll have nothin' to do with her.

Lenaun Sidhe (to Heraty). Listen to me and you will have the wisdom of the ages. You will be a seer and a prophet.

Mrs. Heraty. Don't listen to her; she's a deluderer.

Heraty. Arrah, what's the harm? If she makes me a prophet, I can get out a better almanac than Old Moore.

Mrs. Heraty. Almanac the divil! She'll suck the blood out of you, an' leave you a livin' skeleton, with hardly a shadow to call your own.

Lenaun Sidhe (to Heraty). 'Tis few, indeed, that find favour with me.

Mrs. Heraty. The fewer the better, you shameless hussy.

Lenaun Sidhe. And those that do, become richer than the wealthiest of kings.

Heraty (excitedly). D'ye hear that? She says she'll make me richer than a king.

Mrs. Heraty (clutching his arm). You'll have nothin' to do with her.

Heraty. Arrah, what's the harm in listenin' to her?

Mrs. Heraty. I won't have it.

Heraty. Well, then, don't; I'll have it meself.

Mrs. Heraty. If you listen to that one, I'll never speak to you again.

Heraty. You're eggin' me on now, so you are.

Lenaun Sidhe. O noble man, I can give your tongue the music of the *Sidhe*.

Heraty. Is it that you'd make a singer of me?

Lenaun Sidhe. I would make you the sweetest singer in all the world. At the sound of your voice men will gather around you, like bees about the lily.

Mrs. Heraty. There's bees enough in his bonnet already, thank you.

Lenaun Sidhe. You would take your place amongst the poets and the bards.

Mrs. Heraty (sneering). In the workhouse, I suppose.

Heraty. Will you have manners, woman?

Lenaun Sidhe. If you will come with me, I will lead you to the Land of Wonders.

Mrs. Heraty (desperately). Don't listen to her, John; she'll put a spell on you.

Lenaun Sidhe (singing):—

“ Come with me to the realm of gold
Where loving hearts grow never old,
Where blossoms bright delight the eye
And music sweet is ever nigh,
Where luscious fruits hang on the trees
And perfume comes with every breeze,
Where silver rivers vein the land
And cloudless lakes like mirrors stand.”

Heraty. Dam but that'd be a nice place for a

short holiday. But it'd be hard to live on fruit an' scenery. What's the grub like, miss?

Lenaun Sidhe (recitative) :—

“ Creamy milk from the gentle kine
And jewelled horns all filled with wine,
Mead from the bees' sweet golden store
And meats that warm the body's core.”

Heraty (smacking his lips). Ah, now you're talkin'.

Mrs. Heraty. It'd be like the fruit of the Dead Sea, an' it'd turn to ashes in your mouth.

Heraty. I think I'd chance that.

Mrs. Heraty. I think you'd better come with me out of this before that one tries any more of her blarney on you.

Lenaun Sidhe (singing earnestly) :—

“ Come with me to that peerless vale,
Lovelier far than Innisfail ;
Your laughter there will thrill the glade,
With sinless youth and stainless maid.
You'll know not sorrow nor black care,
For truth and beauty linger there.
And I your willing guide will be,
If you will only come with me.”

Heraty. There's no doubt about it, it must be a grand place ; it'd be a great change from the life of the road.

Lenaun Sidhe. Come with me an' you will live like a prince in *Tir-na-nOge*.

Mrs. Heraty. You'll do no such thing, John. Remember that you have a wife.

Heraty (irritably). I wish I could forget it for a while, an' have a little peace.

(He turns away and sits down at the stone, his head between his hands. There is a far-away look in his eyes.)

Lepracaun (jumping down from the stone). He has wished again! He has wished again! He must forget her for a while. *(To Bean Sidhe.)* Take her away and give him peace.

Bean Sidhe (to Mrs. Heraty). Come with me, and leave him to forget.

Mrs. Heraty. I won't go and leave me fine juicy man to that one's mercy.

Bean Sidhe. Come away. It is decreed, and he must get his wish. *(She takes her by the arm.)* Come now; we must be going.

Mrs. Heraty (stoutly). I won't go, I tell you.

Bean Sidhe (firmly). You must come with me; he has wished it.

(She draws Mrs. HERATY gently by the arm, and they move off slowly, the BEAN SIDHE singing softly.)

Mrs. Heraty (excitedly). I don't want to go, an' I'm goin'; me feet are movin' in spite of me. Oh, there won't be the track of me lovely man when I come back.

(She goes off with the BEAN SIDHE, crying bitterly. FAR DARRIG sits down

on the right smoking, and the LEPRACAUN sits on the left, and begins to work again. The LENAUN SIDHE moves across to HERATY and leans over him. He does not seem to be aware of her presence.)

Lenaun Sidhe. She is gone, O Flower of the Gael.

(He seems not to hear her. She places her hand on his shoulder. He starts and looks up, like one waking from a dream.)

Heraty. I beg your pardon, miss, I was in a kind of a trance, I think.

Lenaun Sidhe. Your thoughts were far away?

Heraty. Me thoughts were in that land you were tellin' me about before—before—— *(He tries to recall what has happened.)*

Lenaun Sidhe. Before she went.

Heraty. Before who went, miss?

Lenaun Sidhe. The woman who was here a while ago.

Heraty. Oh, yes—the *Bean Sidhe*. I mind it now. D'ye know, miss, I think that ould one had the ugliest gob on her I've ever seen on a woman.

Lenaun Sidhe (with a certain pride of race). The woman was much uglier.

Heraty. What woman are you talkin' of? I don't remember any other one.

Lenaun Sidhe. The woman who said she was your wife.

Heraty. You must be jokin' ; I never had the like. Wait now. (*He thinks for a moment.*) I mind a kind of a bad dream I had one time, that I was married to a woman with a tongue that kept goin' like the clapper of a bell ; but sure it was only a dream.

Lenaun Sidhe. That was a strange dream. In Fairyland you would only dream of beautiful things.

Heraty (gallantly). Like yourself, miss. D'ye know what I was going to tell you : if there was a beauty show in these parts I know who'd get the first prize.

Lenaun Sidhe (cooly). Do I know her ?

Heraty. Bedad, I'm thinkin' you do.

Lenaun Sidhe. Maybe she is your sweetheart ?

Heraty (sheepishly). Well, I'm not sure yet.

Lenaun Sidhe. Perhaps you are shy of speaking to her ?

Heraty. Maybe I am.

Lenaun Sidhe. Is she very proud ?

Heraty. She has good reason to be proud.

Lenaun Sidhe. She may not be as proud as she looks ; they are not always, you know.

Heraty. D'ye tell me that ?

Lenaun Sidhe. Will you not tell me who she is ?

Heraty (shyly moving his foot backward and forward on the ground). I don't like.

Lenaun Sidhe. Do tell me. (*She sits down beside him.*)

Heraty. Well, I will then, as you asked me so nicely. Whisper! (*She leans her ear close to his mouth, and just as he is about to speak he sees FAR DARRIG, who is sitting with his pipe in his mouth, watching them with a sardonic smile.*) What's that fella lookin' at? (*To FAR DARRIG.*) What are you lookin' at?

Far Darrig. You.

Heraty. Have you no decency?

Far Darrig. No.

Heraty. Well, you might pretend you had, for manners' sake. Turn your head the other way like a gentleman.

(*FAR DARRIG turns his body completely round and looks over his shoulder. HERATY glowers at him in disgust, and then reaches for his bundle of umbrellas, takes one from it, opens it, and sets it up between himself and FAR DARRIG.*)

Heraty (to Lenaun Sidhe). Now, whisper, an' I'll tell you. (*As he leans towards her again he catches sight of the LEPRACAUN, who has ceased working to watch them. The LEPRACAUN looks down again, and begins hammering once more. HERATY is about to whisper when he sees that he is looking up and hammering at the same time. HERATY reaches for the big umbrella which Mrs. HERATY has left beside the stone, opens it, and sets it up so as to exclude them from the LEPRACAUN'S view.*)

Heraty. Now we can have our little chat in peace.

Lenaun Sidhe. You were going to tell me something about yourself.

Heraty. I was goin' to tell you somethin' about yourself.

Lenaun Sidhe. About me !

Heraty. The identical party.

Lenaun Sidhe. But you were going to tell me something about the pretty girl you would like for your sweetheart.

Heraty. Would you really like to know who she is ?

Lenaun Sidhe. I'd just *love* to know.

Heraty. Well—well, it's yourself an' no other.

Lenaun Sidhe. I'm—I'm—I don't know what to say. This is so sudden.

Heraty (*scratching his head*). Well, it is a bit sudden, I must admit ; I never made love to any girl so quick before.

Lenaun Sidhe (*pouting*). Oh, then I'm not the first ?

Heraty. No, nor the thirty-first. D'ye think I spent my youth on a desert island ?

Lenaun Sidhe. You might at least have pretended that I was the first.

Heraty. Arrah, what would be the good of that ? You wouldn't believe it.

Lenaun Sidhe. No, but I'd like to hear it, all the same.

Heraty. You ought to be complimented to

think that out of so many nice girls I've settled on you, at last, as the pick of the basket.

Lenaun Sidhe. Oh, well, when you put it that way——

Heraty. You see the rest was only a kind of flirtatiousness at dances and the like ; but this is the real McCoy.

Lenaun Sidhe. Can I believe you ?

Heraty. I don't know whether you can or not, but it's true.

Lenaun Sidhe. Men are such deceivers.

Heraty. Some—some, but not all.

Lenaun Sidhe. If I could only trust you ?

Heraty. If you could, you'd be the first.

Lenaun Sidhe. Oh !

Heraty. I mean the first in me heart an' affections.

Lenaun Sidhe (*with a contented sigh*). You have such a way with you.

Heraty. Well, sure if it's the right way we might be able to strike up—what ?

Lenaun Sidhe. "Strike up" ? I don't understand.

Heraty. In troth you do, well. And if we are goin' to strike up, don't you think——
(*He moves a little closer, and tries to put his arm around her. As he does so, a bell strikes twelve in the valley below. At the first stroke the LENAUN SIDHE starts away from him and holds up her hand.*)

Lenaun Sidhe. Hark ! Hark !

Heraty. I'm harkin' all right ; it's only the

bell of the market-house clock in the village below. What about it? I was sayin'——

Lenaun Sidhe (interrupting). It is the time : we dance at midnight.

(She rises, and dance-music begins.)

Heraty (taking out his watch). You needn't be in such a hurry ; that ould clock is ten minutes fast.

Lenaun Sidhe. No matter, the music has started.

Heraty. To the divil with music ! Sit down a minute.

(The smaller fairies begin to dance.)

Lenaun Sidhe. I must dance.

Heraty. You women are a terror for dancin', anyway.

Lenaun Sidhe. Come, you will dance with me ?

Heraty. Oh, I'm no good at dancin', but I'm a divil at sittin' out. You an me'll sit out this one.

Lenaun Sidhe. No. I must dance, and you must dance with me. Come, my hero. *(She holds out her hand to him.)*

Heraty. Well, I suppose if I must, I must.

(He closes the umbrellas, rises to his feet, and the whole party dance two four-handed reels: HERATY, the LENAUN SIDHE, FAR DARRIG and the LEPRACAUN in one, and four of the smaller FAIRIES in

the other. HERATY'S awkwardness shows up in strong contrast to the gracefulness of the FAIRIES. The music grows faster, and the dance more lively, until HERATY can no longer keep up with the others, and drops exhausted at the right of the stone. The FAIRIES go on dancing.)

HERATY (mopping his brow with his red handkerchief). I'm bet—bet to the ropes. (He looks at the others.) Haven't you enough of it yet? Bedad, my girl is the best of the bunch.

(They finish the dance, and the LENAUN SIDHE sits down on the other side of the stone.)

Heraty (to Lenaun Sidhe). Am dam but you're a great girl entirely. But don't sit in the draught. (He opens the big umbrella and hands it across to her.) Put that behind you. She does so.) It will be well for the man that gets you.

Lenaun Sidhe. Do you really and truly think so?

Heraty. I'm sure of it.

Lenaun Sidhe. I may not be all I seem, you know.

Heraty. I'd chance that. I only wish——

Lepracaun (starting forward). You wish—what do you wish?

Heraty. If you want to know, I wish the lady on the other side of the stone was my wife.

Lepracaun. Your wish shall be granted. And remember it is the third wish.

Heraty (to Lenaun Sidhe). What do you say to that, acushla?

(The LENAUN SIDHE pretends shyness, and coyly brings the umbrella round so as to hide her face from HERATY.)

Heraty (to Lepracaun). She's a bit shy, the cratur.

Lepracaun. Never mind that, your wish shall be granted. *(He waves his hands above HERATY'S head.)* Sleep, sleep, mortal man, and when you wake, the lady on the other side of the stone will be your wife.

(Soft music begins ; HERATY grows drowsy and falls asleep. The LENAUN SIDHE drops the umbrella into the position it was in when Mrs. HERATY fell asleep. A cloud crosses the moon, and the light grows dim. The FAIRIES steal away, the music growing softer as they go, until it dies away in the distance. The moonlight comes back slowly with the last strains of the music. HERATY wakes up and scratches his head.)

Heraty. He said that when I woke up, the lady on the other side of the stone would be my wife. *(He stirs the fire with a stick, and the embers glow brightly. He tips the umbrella away, disclosing Mrs. HERATY in the position in*

which she fell asleep.) An', sure enough, she is me wife. *(He looks at Mrs. HERATY, and scratches his head again.)* But that one was a fairy. Maybe this one is a fairy in disguise. *(Mrs. HERATY turns in her sleep, and the fire-light falls on her face.)* If she is, I must say she's dam well disguised. That was a dream I suppose, an' now I'm back to the same ould nightmare again.

(He nods his head resignedly.)

CURTAIN

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